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COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(Commission decision E (46))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. In the light of paragraph 3 of decision E (46), 28 member countries and the European Community have signed the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context so far, and two countries have already ratified it. The first meeting of Signatories prepared a work-plan for the implementation of the Convention pending its entry into force and undertook measures aimed at bringing closer together policies and strategies in relation to environmental impact assessment (ENVWA/WG.3/2).

2. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of decision E (46), the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents were adopted by the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems at their resumed fifth session held in Helsinki (Finland) on 17-18 March 1992 at the Ministerial level, and were signed by 22 and by 23 Governments respectively, and by the European Community. The results of that session will be reported to the forthcoming Follow-up Meeting of the CSCE in Helsinki and to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June 1992.

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3. At its ninth session, the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution adopted the Protocol Concerning the Control of Volatile Organic Compounds (ECE/EB.AIR/30), as well as a Ministerial Statement, in which Parties to the Convention reiterated the need to devote attention to further reductions of emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds (paragraph 5 of decision E (46)).

4. At the same session, the Executive Body considered an outline of a protocol for further reduction of sulphur emissions after 1993, on the basis of critical loads, best available technology, energy savings and other considerations, including market-based economic instruments (paragraph 6 of decision E (46)) and agreed that the Working Group on Strategies will, as a first priority, present a draft protocol in 1993 or report on progress (ECE/EB.AIR/29, Annex I, item 1.2.1).

5. Pursuant to paragraph 7 of decision E (46), the Executive Body decided to extend the fifth phase of EMEP to cover also 1993 and 1994 with the addition of a programme element on monitoring of volatile organic compounds (ECE/EB.AIR/29, paragraph 34(f)).

6. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of decision E (46), a workshop on costing and funding of environmental policies was organized in 1991 in Hungary in cooperation with OECD. In 1992, further workshops will be held: in Hungary, in cooperation with OECD, on the impact of economic restructuring on the environment; in Bulgaria, on legal issues of the improvement of environmental management in countries with economies in transition; and in Israel, on topical issues of interrelationships between agriculture and the environment.

7. In accordance with the Joint Agenda for Action adopted at the Bergen Conference, a High-level Meeting on Cooperation and Sustainable Development was held in Warsaw (Poland) from 10-12 March 1992. It provided an opportunity for Governments, industry and the international community to focus attention on, and develop new opportunities for cooperation on, development strategies for the chemical industry in the 1990s; environment, health and safety in the chemical industry; availability and efficient use of raw materials and energy - infrastructures (transport, communications) and information tools important for chemical industry development; investment and industrial cooperation in the chemical industry; and a new partnership between industry, Governments and international organizations in promoting industrial cooperation and sustainable development.

8. The High-level Meeting adopted conclusions and requested that these be submitted to the Commission for consideration. The results of the High-level Meeting constitute a substantive contribution to the UNCED.

9. The Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics continues to promote the integration of environmental and economic objectives and policies and to enhance cooperation towards sustainable development. Cooperation between the Senior Advisers and the Committee on Agriculture has been initiated on the elaboration of a code of practice for the prevention and control of water pollution from fertilizers and pesticides (paragraph 10 of decision E (46)).

10. The Senior Advisers, at their fifth session, expressed their continued support for promoting the integration of environmental considerations in sectoral policies (such as energy and transport), in particular through the enhancement of the development and application of environmental impact assessment procedures (paragraphs 11 and 12 of decision E (46)).

11. Of relevance to paragraph 12 of decision E (46) is the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project which, during its first year of operation, executed nine events in eight countries. Three drafts have been prepared of a list of selected energy efficient and environmentally sound technologies, products and services; policies and programmes for energy efficiency; and a database of individuals, enterprises and institutions involved in trade and cooperation in energy efficiency. A Symposium on the Environmental Benefits of Energy Conservation is being prepared.

12. An ad hoc Meeting on Global Energy Efficiency 21 was held on 6 March 1992 (ENERGY/AC.13/2) to facilitate information exchange on energy efficiency on a global scale and prepare a Project Plan. This will be transmitted to the Preparatory Committee for the UNCED.

13. The secretariat is preparing a publication containing the full texts of all ECE environmental conventions and protocols as a contribution to UNCED which could provide a stimulus for the elaboration of similar legally binding instruments on environmental matters in the other four regions (paragraph 13 of decision E (46)).

14. Pursuant to paragraph 14 of decision E (46), the Senior Advisers will adopt at their sixth session in 1993 a detailed programme for environmental performance reviews of ECE countries non-members of OECD, to be carried out in close cooperation with OECD.

15. In the light of paragraph 15 of decision E (46) and with a view to promoting the application of effective and environmentally sound technologies, the Senior Advisers will convene in Warsaw (Poland) in 1993 a Seminar on Low-waste Technology and Environmentally Sound Products. A methodology is being developed for setting up environmental product profiles to improve the flow of information on environmentally related specifications of a product. The Working Party on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes will review the development and application of environmental technology and progress made in the implementation of the 1979 Declaration on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Re-utilization and Recycling of Wastes in the ECE region.

16. The Ad Hoc Working Group established by the Senior Advisers to prepare a draft contribution to the Conference "Environment in Europe" to be held in Switzerland in winter 1992/1993 will consider, among other things, the implications of the conclusions of the UNCED relevant to European environmental policies with a view to developing proposals for their implementation. The Working Group will also consider the state of negotiations on the various global problems, such as climate change (paragraphs 16 and 17 of E (46)).

17. Pursuant to paragraph 18 of decision E(46) and as a follow-up to the Ad Hoc Meeting on Environmental Rights and Obligations, held in The Hague (Netherlands) in July 1991, a task force led by the Netherlands will prepare a document on this subject.